

Demonstration in Berlin opposes deportations of refugees to Greece

Our reporters
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Under the slogan “No deportations of Gazans! No deportations of anyone!,” pro-Palestinian organizations rallied at a demonstration in Berlin on Saturday to call for “joining the fight against Germany’s relentless attacks on migrants and asylum seekers.”

A large police presence was on site to intimidate the participants. Video and photographic footage show the police’s provocative and aggressive behaviour. Later in the demonstration, they reportedly arrested three people temporarily for wearing a red triangle as a tattoo, earring, and as a motif on a rainbow flag. The triangle is part of the Palestinian flag but is often banned by the police as an alleged Hamas symbol.

The specific reason for the protest was the threatened deportation of a 34-year-old refugee from Gaza, whose nationality is unclear, and a 32-year-old refugee from Somalia. Their asylum applications had been rejected because, like thousands of refugees on their way to Europe, they had been granted international protection status in another country, in this case, Greece.

The refugees have filed a lawsuit against the rejection of their asylum applications. Their case was set to be heard on April 16 before the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin.

The protest was also directed against the threatened deportation of the Berlin4 due to their pro-Palestinian activities. Although they have not been convicted in court, the four Berliners—three EU citizens and one US citizen—have been ordered to leave Germany by April 21. Otherwise, they face forcible deportation.

At the demonstration, a team from the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) distributed a call to attend a rally in defence of the four activists Thursday, April 17 in front of Berlin’s Humboldt University.

Both cases—the politically motivated deportation of genocide opponents and the deportation of refugees to Greece—are closely related. They are part of a policy of repression aimed at suppressing any form of opposition to the genocide, military buildup and social cuts. The first to be criminalized are people with precarious residency status and without German citizenship but the entire working class is the target.

Berlin is working closely with the governments of other EU states, such as the Greek government under the right-wing New Democracy (ND), to expand Fortress Europe and deter and deport refugees. In their agreement to form a coalition government, the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD), in the style of the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD), are threatening to “strengthen the repatriation offensive” and, in doing so, “also hold the countries of origin accountable.”

In Greece, refugees face a catastrophic situation without the provisions of shelter, food or material assistance. Most refugees there live on the streets or are locked up in camps or prisons for years. In October 2024, the European Court of Human Rights ruled the rapid deportation of a Syrian refugee to Greece in 2018 unlawful because he was detained there after his arrival.

Racist violence and abuse by the neo-Nazi-dominated Greek police are part of everyday life for migrants. They are exploited and harassed as cheap labour. Furthermore, refugees face the threat of deportation to their countries of origin, where wars, rage, poverty and unemployment prevail, or, as in Gaza, where genocide is being perpetrated with the support of the German government.

Due to the devastating situation and inhumane treatment there, a deportation ban to Greece had been in place in Germany in recent years, but this was lifted at the beginning of 2024. In response to inquiries from Pro Asyl, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) announced in February that people from certain countries of origin that supposedly guarantee “human rights-compliant accommodation” would be deported to Greece. Initially, this applied to nationals from Algeria, Bangladesh, Morocco, Pakistan, and Tunisia, followed by Iraq and Iran.

Now, people who flee the Israeli genocide in Gaza and repression in the West Bank are also affected. The BAMF has suspended asylum applications for Palestinian asylum seekers from Gaza since January 9, 2024, citing the “confusing” and “difficult to assess” situation on the grounds.

The website of the movement “Palestine Speaks” describes the current case of a Palestinian refugee from Gaza:

The person concerned was taken into custody by the Berlin police during his appointment at the immigration office in Berlin, taken to the detention centre, and deported to Greece via Frankfurt am Main on a tourist flight accompanied by three federal police officers. At Athens airport, he was held in police custody by the Greek police for four hours before being issued only a “European travel document for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals,” issued by the Berlin State Office for Immigration (LEA Berlin). He was then thrown out onto the street by the Greek police without any further identification documents, without accommodation, money, food, or other support, and without any addresses of contact points in Athens.

The proceedings against the two refugees, which will be decided on Wednesday, could set a precedent for the deportation of a large number of Palestinians and other refugees to Greece.

The courts of first instance rejected their appeal, citing reasons that could have far-reaching implications for future asylum procedures:

While the Greek reception system for recognized beneficiaries of protection continues to exhibit significant deficiencies, these do not generally lead to systemic deficiencies, which certainly do not exist for young, able-bodied, and single male beneficiaries of protection. Members of this group can generally overcome the first six months, during which they are not entitled to a guaranteed minimum income, through their own initiative in finding accommodation and employment.

Germany’s Federal Administrative Court is now to decide on so-called “revisions of facts in asylum proceedings concerning Greece,” i.e., it is to assess the “current general asylum and deportation-relevant situation in the country of deportation (here Greece) for the aforementioned group of persons.”

The legal argument is perfidious. People who belong to the group of “fit, healthy, and single young male beneficiaries of protection”—and this constitutes a large proportion of asylum seekers in Germany—are expected to fend for themselves in Greece. Human rights apparently no longer apply to them, but rather only the “survival of the fittest.”

WSWS reporters spoke to participants in Saturday’s demonstration against deportations.

Mina held up a poster with the portrait of the young Palestinian Ahmad Manasra, who was arrested in East Jerusalem as a 13 year-old. He spent 10 years behind bars in an Israeli prison, Mina says. He was just released a few days ago and now he suffers from mental health problems.

She expressed shock at the threatened deportations: “It’s absurd that someone can be deported because of their own opinions. Then I feel like I’m not allowed to express myself

anymore. Then I don’t feel free here. They say Germany is a free country, but when they do something like this, I feel oppressed.”

She believed the German government was resorting to these methods because “it supports genocide and hasn’t learned anything from the past.” She also considers the recent decision to rearm the Bundeswehr “completely insane.”

A protester from Ireland, active in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in West Cork, said, “Everyone should stand up against this genocide – especially against the complicity of Western imperialist powers like the US and Germany.

He also planned to attend Thursday’s rally and protest against the attacks on the four Gaza activists, two of whom were Irish. The case immediately reminded him of the United States, where Columbia student Mahmoud Khalil was arrested for his pro-Palestinian views.

However, he expressed disappointment that the Left Party in Germany was not organizing a movement against the genocide. WSWS reporters discussed with him the role of the Left Party in supporting the genocide and military buildup.

Some students at the Hertie School, a private business school in Berlin, reported repressive measures against genocide opponents on their campus. They also saw clear parallels to the attacks on international students in America.

Oosugi, a 33-year-old who moved to Berlin from Japan, stressed that “The way Germany actively supports genocide is quite shocking.” Many people were already being deported, including refugees from Gaza. In his view, the impending deportation of the Berlin4 could actually set a precedent.

“The fact that EU citizens, who supposedly have the right to freedom of movement, are now being deported because of their political views is really just a step away from imprisoning people for political activism. I can imagine that Germany will actually do that.” The government was testing how far it could go with repression until the German public reacted, he said.

In Japan, many people had previously admired Germany for its policy of remembering the Nazi past, but now this was all revealed to be fake, he said. “The international reputation that Germany has gained since World War II has been completely destroyed because they have shown that they openly support genocide,” Oosugi said. He also pointed with concern to the militarization in Germany and Japan and the new military partnership between the two countries.



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